

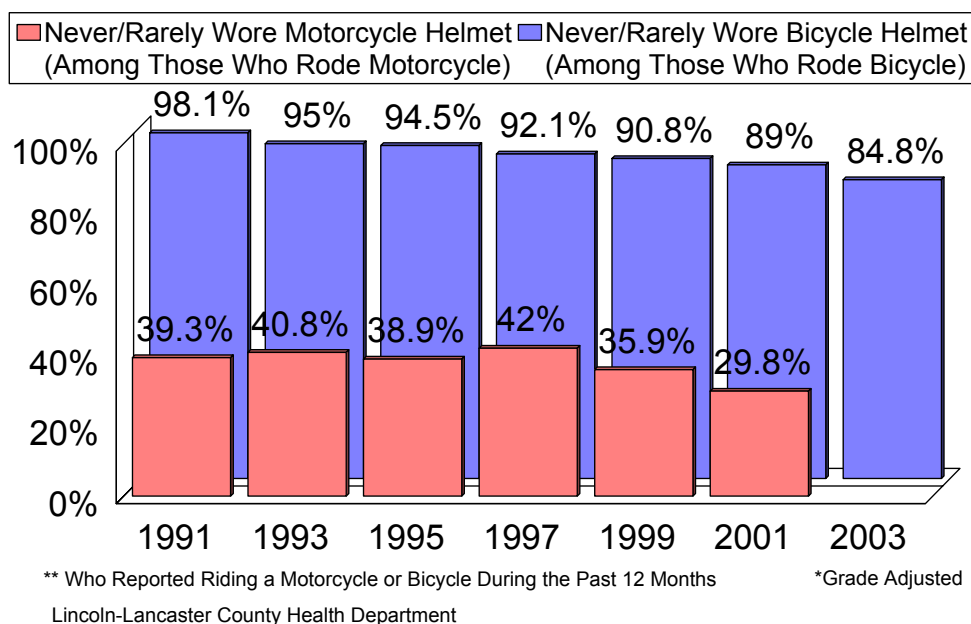
Helmet and Seatbelt Use

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey asked students various questions about safety and violence related behavior. More specifically, students were asked about helmet use while operating a motorcycle or bike and seatbelt use while driving or riding a motor vehicle.

Highlights

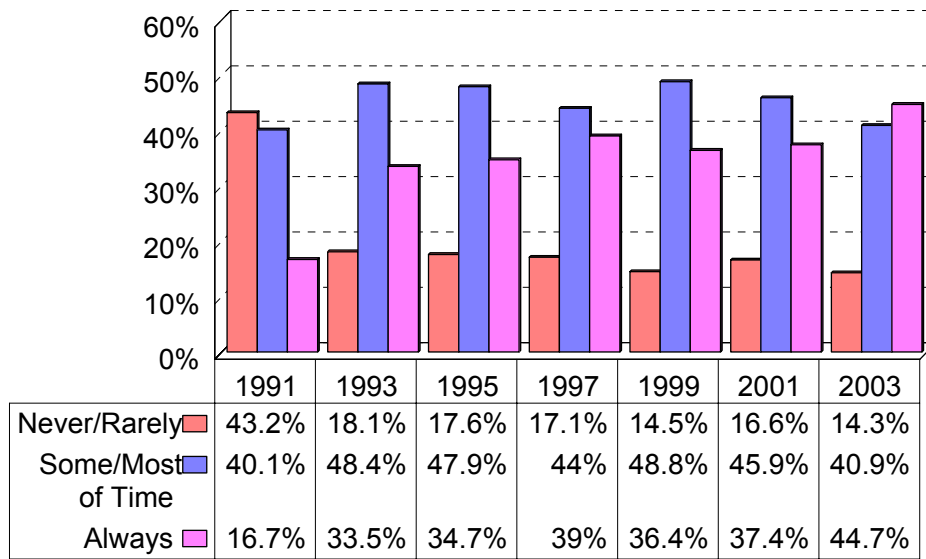
- L As shown in figure 1, the reported usage of bicycle helmets by Lancaster County teens has increased substantially since 1991. Only 84.8% of youths reported never/rarely wearing a bicycle helmet in 2003 compared to 98.1% in 1991 (a question on helmet use by motorcyclist was not asked in 2003).

Figure 1: Helmet Use*
High School Students**



- L The percentage of teens who reported always wearing their seatbelts when riding in a car driven by someone else decreased from 39% in 1997 to 37.4% in 2001 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Seatbelt Use*
High School Students Who Rode With Someone Else

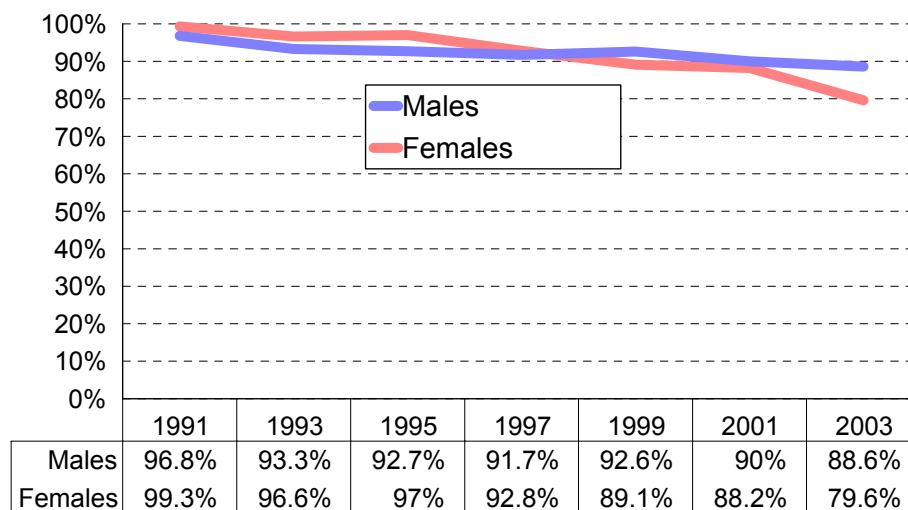


Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department

*Grade Adjusted

Figure 3 indicates that the percentage of teens who reported never or rarely wearing a helmet when riding a bicycle has declined significantly for both female or male teens from 1991 to 2003, nevertheless only a small percentage (slightly over 20 percent of females and 10 percent of males) routinely wear bicycle helmets.

Figure 3: Rare Helmet Use (Bicycle)*
Never or Rarely Wore a Bicycle Helmet
(High School Students Who Reported Riding Bicycle in Past 12 Months)

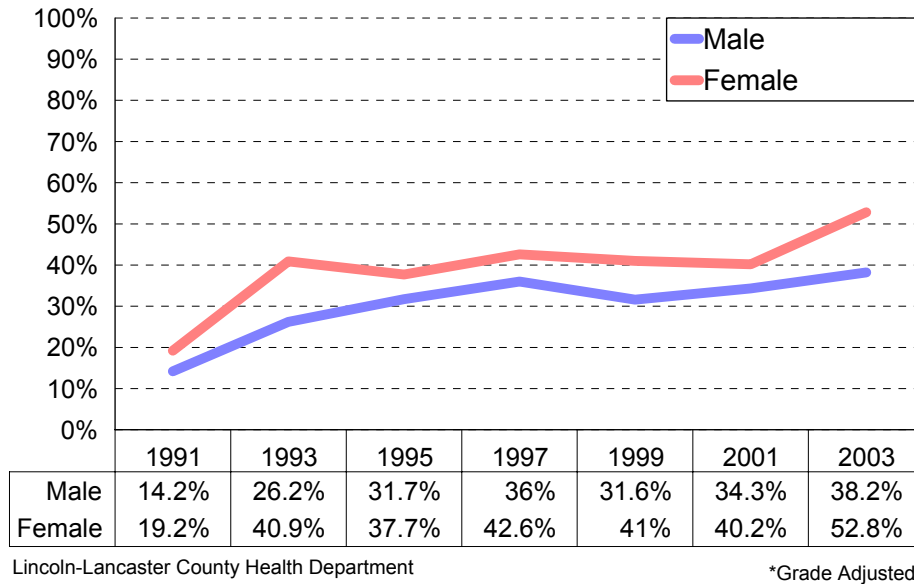


Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department

*Grade Adjusted

L Seatbelt use while riding a car driven by someone else has increased significantly since 1997. Female teens were more likely to use a seatbelt than male teens (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Seatbelt Use*
Always Wear a Seatbelt When Riding in a Car Driven by Someone Else
High School Students



L Figures 5 and 6 respectively show bicycle helmet use (never or rarely wore) and seatbelt use while riding in a car driven by someone else for respondents of different school grades.

Figure 5: Rare Helmet Use (Bicycle) by Grade
Never or Rarely Wore a Bicycle Helmet
(High School Students Who Reported Riding Bicycle in Past 12 Months)

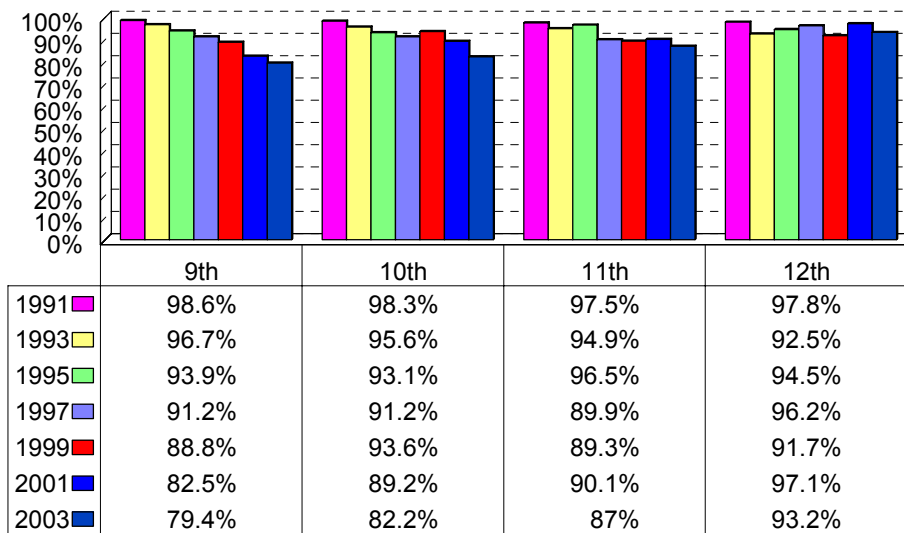
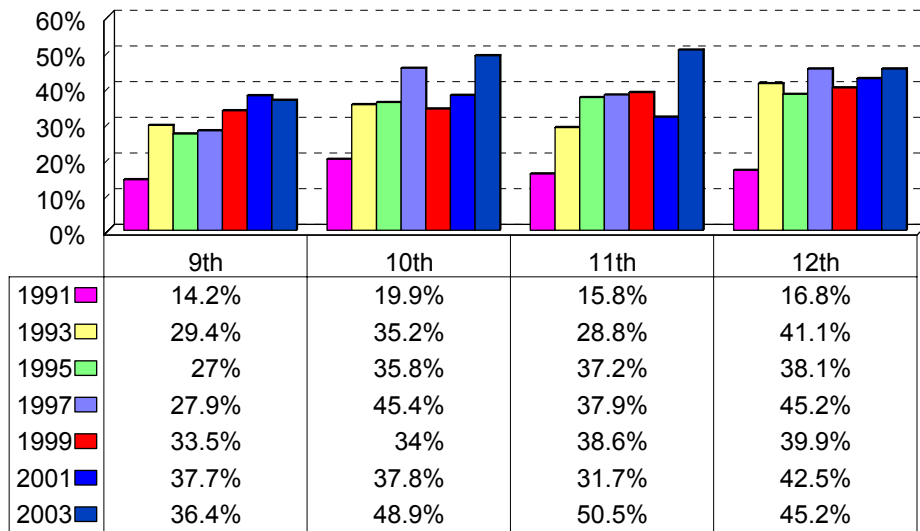


Figure 6: Seatbelt Use by Grade
Always Wear a Seatbelt When Riding in a Car Driven by Someone Else
High School Students



Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department

Public Health Comment: Seatbelt and Helmet Use

-Brian Baker

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for adolescents in the United States. More than 4,000 youth 11 to 18 years of age die each year in motor vehicle crashes, making this category the leading cause of adolescent unintentional injury death. Occupant restraints (seatbelts) are proven to reduce the risk of death and serious injury in a crash by 55% when used properly. In 2003, only 44.7% of surveyed Lancaster County youth reported wearing a seatbelt when riding with someone else. Nationally, teenage males lag behind female teens in seatbelt use. In 2001, 18.1% of high school males said they rarely or never wore a seatbelt as a passenger, compared to 10.2% of high school females.

Head injury is the leading cause of death and disability in bicycle crashes. Over 315,000 youth were injured in pedal-cycle crashes during a two year period, 2001-2002. Children and youth are 14 times more likely to survive a bike crash if they are wearing a helmet. However, in 2003, 84.8% of students who rode a bicycle during the past 12 months never or rarely wore a bicycle helmet.

Community education and enforcement efforts have had some positive impact on rates of seatbelt and helmet use by youth. However, usage rates of seatbelts and helmets among youth remain disproportionately low as compared to other age groups. The personal and economic costs paid by individuals and the community for these injuries warrant an increased commitment to prevent them by families, safety advocates, and public and private sector organizations.

The Lincoln-Lancaster County SAFE KIDS Coalition is comprised of individuals representing the public and private sectors and is committed to addressing occupant restraint and helmet use among our children and youth. The Coalition's Child Passenger Safety Task Force provides education and services to parents with the intent of creating a high priority early in the child's life of consistent use of occupant restraints that will continue through the teen and adult years. The Coalition's Sports and Wheeled Sports Task Force works with middle schools to conduct presentations on the importance of helmet use and provides free helmets to students pledging to wear them. This task force also works with state and local policy makers in an effort to introduce and strengthen bicycle safety and helmet use policies.